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RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0753
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5323
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 RIYADH 000445

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NSC FOR JBRENNAN AND JDUNCAN; DEPARTMENT PASS TO NEA/ARP
(HARRIS), AND S/WCI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2019

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SUBJECT: SAUDI INTELLIGENCE CHIEF TALKS REGIONAL SECURITY
WITH BRENNAN DELEGATION

REF: A) RIYADH 346 B) JEDDAH 085 C) DHAHRAN 014

RIYADH 00000445 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: DCM David Rundell for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. SUMMARY AND KEY POINTS:

-- (C) HRH Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, head of Saudi Arabia's external intelligence agency, the General Intelligence Presidency (GIP), hosted Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counter Terrorism John Brennan March 15 to discuss counter terrorism cooperation and regional security issues. Brennan was accompanied by Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Clint Williamson and Ambassador Fraker.

-- (S) The meeting reaffirmed close U.S.-Saudi security ties and served to reassure the Saudis that the new administration will maintain these ties. The Prince received Brennan's message warmly and in turn evinced enthusiasm for continued U.S./Saudi cooperation in facing regional threats, many of which lie on Saudi Arabia's doorstep.

-- (S) The Prince offered frank views and committed Saudi support and counsel but had less to offer in terms of advice. The Prince detailed the difficult challenges faced in Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, after which Brennan asked for the good news in the region. The Prince exclaimed in reply, "There isn't any!"

12. (C) CT COOPERATION: To open the meeting, Brennan complimented U.S.-Saudi counter terrorism cooperation and thanked the Saudis on behalf of the President for their support. Muqrin noted that GIP's cooperation with the Mabathith (the Interior Ministry's internal security branch) is "better than it used to be." "Internal has an external head," he added, portraying security problems inside Saudi Arabia as having external direction.

13. (C) YEMEN: The Prince spoke openly about the challenges in Yemen. He revealed that he and Assistant Interior Minister Prince Mohamed bin Nayef have made frequent trips there. Muqrin described the shared border as "1200 kilometers of dunes and mountains" with the Saudis catching and returning at times 5-6000 illegal border crossers daily.

Saudi attempts to help the Yemenis are focused in the north, where he said they are trying to help them "find jobs and stay there." ROYG President Saleh "has no resources, but is getting help from Iran and Libya." Muqrin added that Al-Qaeda (AQ), squeezed elsewhere, is moving operations to Yemen.

14. (C) AFGHANISTAN PEACE PROSPECTS: On Afghanistan, the Prince opined that "Karzai wants peace, but what about the other side?" He repeated the four conditions the Saudis have told the Taliban they must accept before Saudi Arabia would engage as a broker:

- Letter from Mullah Omar committing to peace
- Detach from AQ through a public denunciation
- Disarm and become a political party
- Accept that Afghanistan is a country for all its people.

Muqrin said many Afghans favor peace. He recalled a conversation with the Grand Mufti of Afghanistan, who was "fed up with 30 years of killing." He observed that Pakistan and India were initially willing to help with Afghanistan but are too suspicious of each other to help effectively. If and when Taliban come to the table, those supporting a peace process must "give them a better life;" otherwise someone who does not want peace need only "fire a rocket and run."

15. (C) ON SOUTH ASIA: Brennan explained U.S. confidence building efforts between Pakistan and both Afghanistan and India, and stressed the importance of Saudi Arabia's efforts and Muqrin's personal role. Muqrin responded that he can't do anything on Afghanistan because he has no contacts among the Taliban. He referred to UN travel restrictions on

RIYADH 00000445 002.2 OF 003

Taliban leaders and Russian complaints about Taliban visits to Mecca and Medina, although, he said, Saudi Arabia can't prevent Muslims from visiting the Holy Cities. Muqrin said Saudi efforts to cool down the India/Pakistan situation began following the Mumbai terror attacks. The Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan had brought all the Pakistani factions to the table with the message they should "look after Pakistan" rather than their own interests because the Pakistani state itself was so fragile.

16. (C) STILL UNEASY ON IRAQ: When Brennan asked Muqrin if he was hopeful about Iraq, the Prince joked that Iraq is "a nice story." In a refrain repeated later by the King, Muqrin said the Kingdom warned the previous U.S. administration that Iraq would be "a swamp...easy to go in, hard to get out...with high casualties...and al-Qaeda will be there." But, he felt, Saudi advice was not heeded. When asked about sending a Saudi Ambassador to Iraq, Muqrin repeated the Kingdom's standard reply about security concerns, asking "How much is an ambassador's life worth?" (Comment: The Saudi reluctance to send an Ambassador to Baghdad likely has more to do with the King's distaste for PM Nuri al-Maliki than with security. End Comment)

17. (C) PERSIAN MEDDLING: Prince Muqrin described Iran as "all over the place now." The "Shiite crescent is becoming a full moon," encompassing Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait and Yemen among Iran's targets. In the Kingdom, he said "we have problems in Medina and Eastern Province." When asked if he saw Iran's hand in last month's Medina Riots (reftels), he strongly affirmed his belief that they were "definitely" Iranian supported. (Comment: Muqrin's view was not necessarily supported by post's Saudi Shi'a sources.) Muqrin bluntly stated "Iran is becoming a pain in the..." and he expressed hope the President "can get them straight, or straighten them out."

18. (C) WEANING SYRIA FROM IRAN: Brennan asked Muqrin if he believed the Syrians were interested in improving relations with the United States. "I can't say anything positive or

negative," he replied, declining to give an opinion. Muqrin observed that the Syrians would not detach from Iran without "a supplement." He moved on to express Saudi concern over Lebanon's upcoming elections. He mused about the Syrian-backed parties creating a "majority by attrition" by assassinating anti-Syria politicians. Without direct evidence of this, he said, it was necessary "to look at who is benefiting." Brennan asked if Syria could be helpful with Hamas, to which Muqrin suggested that Hamas "has already bypassed Syria," implying that Hamas now works directly with Iran.

¶9. (S/NF) UAV'S WANTED?: The Prince brought up a Saudi request for UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) which he claimed King Abdullah made personally to President Bush, to which the former President had replied, "Done." However, he said, the Saudis have heard nothing since. Ambassador Fraker pointed out that he had been in Saudi Arabia for two years and had not heard of this request. Muqrin said he had heard it "so many times" and pointed out that "this is the problem with one-on-one" conversations. He added that "the King was so upset" by the lack of USG response. Asked by Brennan if the SAG also wants UAVs for the Saudi-Yemen border, Muqrin replied that the Saudi-Yemen border was not a problem when the King made the request, but anything that secured the border would be a benefit. He gave the example of smugglers: "You don't know what they are smuggling."

¶10. (C) FINAL ADVICE: The Prince complimented the President: "I like his attitude." "But," he added, "he'll meet the facts later." He cautioned, "many people are not as good-hearted as he is." Muqrin guaranteed that the Saudis would provide advice and consultation on regional issues. "We give our friends anything they need."

¶11. (S) COMMENT: Muqrin has the confidence of King Abdullah, who has given him the lead on Saudi efforts to resolve conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and recently sent him

RIYADH 00000445 003.2 OF 003

to Damascus as part of Saudi efforts to forge rapprochement with Syria. Muqrin also appears to be heavily involved in Saudi dealings with Yemen, and likely has personal as well as professional reasons for being so. In an aside, Muqrin said Yemeni President Saleh's son had visited Riyadh three nights previously to attend the wedding of Muqrin's son. Muqrin himself probably has Yemeni heritage through his mother, whose family name was al-Yamaniyah. While some observers believe Muqrin, the youngest surviving son of Saudi Arabia's founder King Abdulaziz could be king someday, others point to his non-Saudi mother and say "never."

¶12. (U) This message was cleared by Assistant to the President Brennan.
FRAKER